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SUBJECT: CANADIAN PERMREP URGES MORE UN INVOLVEMENT ON AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MOLLY PHEE, FOR REASONS 1.4 B /D

Summary

**¶11. (C)** The Canadian Mission to the UN hosted a select meeting of PermReps from key coalition countries active in Afghanistan on March 3 to consider how to improve the effectiveness of the UN role in Afghanistan and to ensure UN leadership in New York dedicates more attention and resources to its mission in Afghanistan. Afghan PermRep Tanin underscored his concern that negative western characterizations of the situation not only inaccurately portrayed reality on the ground but also falsely suggested to the Afghan people that the international community is lessening its commitment to President Karzai and Afghanistan. He said this signal is aggravating internal Afghan polarization in the run-up to elections. Tanin called for the appointment of a strong SRSG and greater coherence from the international community, asserting that the UN, NATO, and donors failed to coordinate effectively.

**¶12. (C)** Italian PermRep Spatafora said the Security Council should use the upcoming renewal of the UNAMA mandate to send a signal of resolve from the international community. There was general agreement that the mandate needed to be revised to reflect the priorities of key coalition countries about the UN role, including: improving coordination among civilians and with the military; engaging more with the government of Afghanistan and encouraging reconciliation among Afghan groups; and expanding an effective UN presence in the provinces. At the meeting's conclusion, the PermReps agreed to take the following steps. First, to continue this forum to press the UN. Second, to provide recommendations on revising the mandate to the Italians, who hold the pen on UNAMA in the Security Council. Third, to meet again March 13-14 with a visiting French delegation to discuss the June Compact conference in Paris. Finally, Canadian PermRep McNee offered to arrange a meeting between the group and DPKO Under Secretary-General Guehenno, as well as with the new SRSG, when appointed.

New Forum

**¶13. (C)** At the suggestion of Amb Khalilzad, Canadian PermRep McNee hosted a breakfast meeting of PermReps from Afghanistan, the US, UK, France, Italy, Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Japan and Australia on March 3. McNee noted that both the Afghanistan group in the General Assembly, led by Germany, and the Afghanistan Core Group for the Security Council, currently led by Italy, were large and ineffective. He proposed the establishment of a select group of countries invested in Afghanistan for the purpose of pressing UN headquarters in New York to take the steps necessary to

improve the effectiveness of UNAMA. McNee observed that there are multiple ways for this group to take action, including: revising the UNAMA mandate; pressing for the appointment of a new SRSG; pressing the UN to improve its compensation package for UN personnel in Afghanistan so as to facilitate the effort to fill vacancies; and working with DPKO and the UN's security department to ensure an effective UN presence is deployed throughout Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) All delegations present enthusiastically welcomed the establishment of such a group, agreed that there was a need for targeted engagement with the UN, and concurred that those delegations present are the appropriate members. Separately, Canadian expert Alan Bowman told USUN that McNee has been under pressure from Ottawa to convince the Secretary-General to make Afghanistan one of his priorities.

#### Afghans Fear International Community Will Leave

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¶5. (C) Afghan PermRep Tanin offered a strong critique of the portrayal of the situation in Afghanistan by western media and NGOs. He complained that these westerners, with little exposure to Afghanistan, presented a uniformly negative view, when in fact the situation, particularly security and stability, is mixed, depending upon the province. He said Afghans interpreted these characterizations as a sign that the west is looking for an exit strategy from President Karzai and Afghanistan, and expressed concern that this perception is polarizing Afghan political groups in the run up to the elections. On the UN role, he called for the appointment of a strong SRSG and underscored the need for greater coherence. He complained that the UN, NATO, and donors failed to coordinate effectively. He said the UN should help with Afghan reconciliation prior to the elections.

#### Delegation Views

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¶6. (C) French DPR Lacroix, noting President Sarkozy's intention to increase the French military commitment to Afghanistan, discussed the upcoming conference in Paris on the Compact. He reported that French officials involved in planning the conference would visit New York March 13-14, and the group agreed to meet with them. He suggested that the UNAMA mandate might need to be revised if the conference resulted in the revision of Compact benchmarks, a point later echoed by the UK. He also called for clarification of priorities in the UNAMA mandate. The German PermRep emphasized the importance of a UN role in elections and a UN role in the provinces, and cautioned against resolution language that would appear to differentiate between the SRSG and the UNAMA mission.

¶7. (C) The Italian PermRep, keying off of the Afghan PermRep's remarks, said the new mandate should signal the resolve of the international community to remain engaged with Afghanistan. The Danes and the Dutch expressed concern about the high vacancy rate of UN personnel in the provinces, and the Dutch made clear the circuit rider approach had not been successful.

¶8. (C) Amb Khalilzad asked the group to ensure that efforts to modify the mandate not open the text up to mischief by the Russians or others. He summarized the challenges facing UNAMA: improved coordination among the civilian entities, a more central role for the government of Afghanistan; focus on agreed strategic priorities; and operational execution of those priorities.

¶9. (C) McNee closed the meeting by summarizing next steps: delegations should feed input for the revised UNAMA mandate to the Italians; the group should meet again March 13 or 14 with visiting French officials on the next Compact conference; McNee would arrange meetings for the group with Guehenno and the new SRSG, when appointed.

KHALILZAD